

Message

From: Deegan, Dave [Deegan.Dave@epa.gov]
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To: R1 Executives All [R1ExecutivesALL@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Daily News Clips: Afternoon Edition, 10/13/20

From: Kibilov, Nicholas
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To: AO OPA OMR CLIPS
Subject: Daily News Clips: Afternoon Edition, 10/13/20

Daily News Clips: October 13, 2020 (afternoon edition)

Agency

[TheProgressive: Trump's War on the Environment](#)

Agriculture

[SuccessfulFarming: BASF INTRODUCES NEW SOYBEAN SEED TREATMENTS](#)

[ProgressiveFarmer: Hemp Industry Seeing Red Over DEA Regulations](#)

Air

[Environment Texas: Illegal Air Pollution in Texas 2020](#)

[JDSupra: Ozone/Clean Air Act: NESCAUM Comments on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Proposal to Retain Current National Ambient Air Quality Standard](#)

Chemicals

[nj.com: N.J. toxic site cleanup won't go far enough | Letter](#)

[CourthouseNews: Tougher Emissions Rules Sought for Plants Spewing Cancer-Causing Pollution](#)

Climate

[Politico: A reelected Trump's climate control](#)

[Politico: EPA's methane rollback eyes future hurdles for climate rules](#)

COVID-19

[WaterWorld: A Secret Weapon in the Fight against COVID-19](#)

Energy

[ChainStoreAge: URW gets EPA award for use of green power](#)

Enforcement

[Accountability-Central: Gulf Coast Sequestration Makes Initial Filing to Obtain EPA Permit for CCS Project](#)

Superfund

[MontanaStandard: EPA's Benevento, Daines join Anaconda hotel groundbreaking](#)

Water

[The Virginian Pilot: HRSD receives \\$225 million loan from EPA to help replenish aquifer](#)

[EINPressWire: Innovate Inc's Geospatial Services featured in NIH NITAAC CIOSP3 Solutions Showcase](#)

[FastCompany: Jaden Smith just expanded his mission to deliver clean water to disenfranchised communities](#)

Trump's War on the Environment

<https://progressive.org/magazine/trump-war-on-environment-moffitt/>

by [Lena Moffitt](#)

October 13, 2020

It's hard to convey the scope of the Trump Administration's attacks on the environmental protections that keep our air and water clean, stabilize our climate, and improve public health. There is just so much.

Even as COVID-19 caused unemployment to skyrocket, the Trump Administration still prioritized ticking off the boxes on the oil and gas industry's wishlist over worker protections.

A list compiled by National Geographic ran to more than 21,000 words, more than ten times the length of this article—and that was only through May 2019. A group of former Environmental Protection Agency staffers came up with another list of what would have to be done to reset the EPA after the Trump Administration. It ran to nearly two hundred pages.

The administration has abandoned the Paris Agreement, the landmark international treaty to limit climate catastrophe to manageable levels. It slashed the size of national monuments like Bears Ears in Utah, handed over our public lands to fossil-fuel interests, and built a wall across fragile desert ecosystems. It rolled back the fuel-economy standards for cars that comprised the nation's most influential and ambitious policy to tackle climate change. It has refused to ban pesticides that harm children's brains, and loosened regulations on toxins that increase our risk of cancer, asthma, and even premature death.

While the rollbacks are numerous, the Trump Administration's playbook is simple: Give polluting industries what they want. Ignore what people need and take steps to cut them out of the process. Normalize corruption and attacks on the institutions meant to counterbalance the administration's power. And never take any action that reflects the reality of climate change.

The Trump Administration has often played Santa Claus for extractive industries, checking off nearly every item on their wish lists, regardless of the costs to public health and the environment.

Consider the wish list submitted by coal baron Robert Murray, a Trump donor who asked the administration to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, end the Obama Administration's Clean Power Plan, and cut the EPA's staff by at least half. Within its first year, the Trump Administration made progress on nearly all of these items, prompting an article that ran in The New York Times under the headline, "How a Coal Baron's Wish List Became President Trump's To-Do List."

Destruction caused at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, where construction crews drained groundwater and blew up portions of the site to make space for the border wall.

The EPA's own analysis estimated that the repeal of the Clean Power Plan alone could cause up to 1,400 premature deaths every year by 2030.

Trump's Interior Department took a similarly generous view toward the fifty-three rollbacks requested or supported by corporations and industry groups like the American Petroleum Institute. The Center for Western Priorities found that, by 2019, Trump's Interior Department had made thirty-six of those wishes come true, and were plugging away at the rest.

Among these rollbacks were the largest-ever removal of federal protections for public lands: On a single day, the Trump Administration cut nearly two million acres of land from the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. These acres encompassed sites sacred to Native peoples, as well as the locations of ancient artifacts, rock paintings, and cliff dwellings.

But that was far from all: Following industry lobbying, the Interior Department lifted a moratorium on new coal mining on public lands, worked to expand offshore drilling, and slashed protections for threatened and

endangered species. These rollbacks are harming landscapes and animal populations in ways that will take generations to recover from, if they are able to recover at all.

Even as COVID-19 caused unemployment to skyrocket, the Trump Administration still prioritized ticking off the boxes on the oil and gas industry's wishlist over worker protections.

According to Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette, the Trump Administration worked closely with the Federal Reserve to ensure that oil and gas companies got what they wanted from its Main Street Lending Program. That included giving up to \$200 million in taxpayer-backed loans to bail out oil and gas companies for poor business decisions that they made before the pandemic.

While industries' requests have found a warm reception, the Trump Administration has been decidedly less friendly to public input. It routinely ignores the hundreds or even thousands of public comments lodged in opposition to environmental rollbacks. Now, through its attacks on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the administration is trying to make sure that the public has even less chance to be heard.

Known as "the people's environmental law," NEPA requires federal agencies to identify the environmental, economic, and health impacts of major projects like highways and pipelines, gather input from the people who will have to live near them, and weigh alternatives. It's a crucial (and sometimes the only) way for communities to express concerns about a project. And it's especially important for communities of color and low-income communities, where developers often seek to build dirty projects.

But in July—and once again, at industry groups' behest—the Trump Administration rolled back NEPA. Now government agencies are prevented from considering the cumulative and indirect impacts that a project might have, including its contributions to the climate crisis and a community's overall pollution burden. This allows agencies to disregard, say, the mom who argues that her community already has enough sources of air pollution, as evidenced by her kid's asthma attacks, or a young person who opposes new fossil-fuel infrastructure due to concern about climate catastrophe.

Under the Trump Administration's reinterpretation of the people's environmental law, the people are being silenced. And so are the voices of scientists who point out the costs of rollbacks to public health and the environment.

According to a report from the nonpartisan National Task Force on Rule of Law & Democracy, the United States has entered a "crisis point" for science. Key scientific posts are being left unfilled, and industry representatives are taking roles that scientists used to fill.

Politically inconvenient research has been suppressed, defunded, and discredited. At the Department of the Interior, officials slipped claims into at least nine reports that human-caused carbon levels are helping plant growth—a disingenuous attempt to downplay the catastrophic effects of climate change.

Perhaps the most egregious way that Trump has undermined environmental protection is through his appointment of conflicted and even corrupt officials to key agencies.

Former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, for example, faced a whopping eighteen federal investigations during his two-year tenure, some alleging favorable treatment of companies with whom he had personal connections. After Hurricane Maria in 2017, the former Congressman's department awarded a noncompetitive, \$300 million contract to a tiny company from his hometown of Whitefish, Montana, to help repair Puerto Rico's electric grid. Zinke knew Whitefish Energy's chief executive officer and his son had been employed by the company, whose primary investors were major Trump donors.

Meanwhile, the temporary appointment of former oil and gas lobbyist William Pendley as acting director of the Bureau of Land Management has been repeatedly extended to spare him a Senate confirmation hearing, where he might be asked about his 2016 op-ed calling for the federal government to sell off its public lands.

Pendley helped move the Bureau of Land Management from Washington, D.C., to Grand Junction, Colorado—a move that former Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney admitted was a way to get rid of pesky public servants without openly firing them. And it worked. Pendley managed to dump 70 percent of his agency’s Washington staff, turning it into a “ghost ship,” according to one staffer. It now shares a building with a Chevron office, the Colorado Oil and Gas Association, and a natural gas exploration business.

The EPA is run by Andrew Wheeler, a former coal lobbyist who has repeatedly approved policies that help his former clients—at great cost to public health. Under his tenure, EPA staffing has dropped to its lowest point in a decade. Those who remain are demoralized and struggle to enforce the environmental protections still on the books. In January 2019, the EPA’s criminal prosecutions hit a thirty-year low, leaving communities, especially communities of color, with limited recourse when bad actors release toxins into their air and water.

The Trump Administration has spent nearly four years working to strip scientists, the public, and environmental organizations of the power to meaningfully counteract its agenda of opening up our public lands and natural resources for private exploitation. Defenders of the environment now have fewer avenues to resist the administration’s agenda than they did in 2016.

That’s especially problematic when it comes to the Trump Administration’s climate agenda, which can be summarized as “Burn, baby, burn.” This country is already in a climate emergency, as shown by recent devastating, unprecedented wildfires, wind storms, and hurricanes. The Trump Administration has steadfastly dismissed the warnings of activists and scientists who understand that we have only a short window to drastically reduce emissions and avert catastrophic climate change.

Instead, the administration has rolled back rules governing emissions of methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases; loosened the rules on how much carbon that cars and power plants may emit; and made it harder for future administrations to address the climate crisis. It’s also declared open season on drilling for more oil even on lands sacred to Indigenous peoples, like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In 2017, Trump signed an executive order that eliminated the federal government’s obligation to build infrastructure that will withstand the effects of a changing climate, like sea-level rise. This forces communities to depend on infrastructure that might become unusable, or even dangerous, over the next few decades.

Trump’s Interior Department has also eliminated the requirement to consider climate change in land, wildlife, and water management, to remove what Secretary David Bernhardt called “potential burdens” to energy development. The department refuses to even mention climate change in key governing documents, like its current strategic plan.

The Trump Administration’s playbook has been relentless and consistent. Place our government and natural resources at the disposal of extractive industries. Silence scientists, community members, and federal employees who seek to make the government serve the public good with constant fear-mongering about the dangers to the nation’s economy posed by “radical environmentalists.” Appoint agency bosses who are openly hostile to the cause of environmental protection. Deny the reality of climate change. And watch as, day by day, the world gets hotter, drier, and less hospitable to life.

Fortunately, the Trump Administration has been countered by a strong, resurgent environmental movement. Indigenous peoples and their allies have managed to throw obstacles in the path of new oil and gas pipeline projects, including the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the Constitution Pipeline. Activists have created a business

environment in which making investments in major gas infrastructure is now a huge risk to reputations and bottom lines.

And those who have borne the pollution burden of the fossil-fuel industry for far too long are rising up to demand that local leaders address the interconnected crises of climate change, racial injustice, and economic injustice.

We've seen Black activists work to make defunding the police the new common sense. Less well-known is that the Movement for Black Lives ascendant platform includes a demand to invest in clean energy, local food systems, and other building blocks of a safe environment.

Despite the Trump Administration's best efforts, the environmental movement is stronger than ever, more intersectional than ever, and more capable of mobilizing millions in the streets and making our presence felt. That offers at least a modicum of hope to those who seek a world that is greener, healthier, and more hospitable to life.

BASF INTRODUCES NEW SOYBEAN SEED TREATMENTS

<https://www.agriculture.com/news/crops/basf-introduces-new-soybean-seed-treatments>

By Successful Farming Staff

10/13/2020

BASF has announced three new products in its soybean seed treatment portfolio: Vault IP Plus seed treatment, Poncho XC seed treatment and Relenya seed treatment, all recently registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These products are now commercially available through local retailers for use in the 2021 soybean growing season.

"Our enhanced soybean seed treatment portfolio offers growers a strong start to their growing season," said Melissa Chu, product manager, seed treatments for BASF, in a BASF news release. "Now with a complete lineup of seed treatment solutions BASF provides premium protection from early-season insects and diseases, along with nitrogen fixation to help maximize their seed investment."

Inoculate and Protect for Higher Yields

Vault IP Plus seed treatment is the new standard to inoculate and protect soybean seed. To maximize yield potential, soybean crops require a lot of nitrogen and up to 60% comes from beneficial rhizobia bacteria. Inoculating a soybean seed with healthy, active rhizobia to maximize the nodulation process reduces the risk of plants not having enough nitrogen. Annual inoculation from Vault IP Plus is beneficial to soybean fields planted early, in wet and dry soils where native rhizobia may die-off or be less effective, say BASF officials.

Plus, the seed treatment's dual biofungicide component provides effective protection against soilborne diseases including Fusarium and Rhizoctonia – two major fungal pathogens causing root rot, say BASF officials. This added protection works alongside base fungicides to give soybeans an extended period of protection from fungal diseases, say BASF officials.

Vault IP Plus is also designed with the lowest application rate in the category leaving room for other treatments and 40% reduced packaging, which means retailers are getting a superior product with less waste, say BASF officials.

Early Season Insect Control

Poncho XC seed treatment is the latest addition to the Poncho family of products. Long known for its strong legacy of protecting corn, Poncho XC features the same long-lasting and fast-acting insect protection, now available for soybeans, say BASF officials.

Poncho XC delivers immediate efficacy against damaging early season insects such as aphids, bean leaf beetles, thrips and white grubs. Its systemic mode of action protects the entire plant, supporting healthier plant establishment. It also provides a consistent yield benefit across a wide range of geographies and environments, say BASF officials.

Added Boost of Protection

Relenya seed treatment offers soybean growers a new seed-applied tool for disease management. Powered by Revysol fungicide, Relenya can be added to a base fungicide foundation to boost disease protection under Fusarium and Rhizoctonia pressure. When partnered with a base package, Relenya will also boost yield potential under varied levels of disease pressure, say BASF officials.

Vault IP Plus, Poncho XC and Relenya join ILEVO and Obvius Plus seed treatments to create a comprehensive portfolio of early-season soybean solutions. Together these products will offer soybean growers superior protection against insects and disease as well as a performance boost from Relenya seed treatment, say BASF officials.

Hemp Industry Seeing Red Over DEA Regulations

<https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/blogs/ag-policy-blog/blog-post/2020/10/13/hemp-industry-seeing-red-dea>

By Chris Clayton, DTN Ag Policy Editor

13 Oct 2020 | 12:06 PM CDT

The Hemp Industries Association is suing the Drug Enforcement Administration and its acting administrator, arguing DEA is trying to regulate products derived from hemp through a skewed view of hemp provisions in the 2018 farm bill.

In a petition filed Monday in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the hemp industry challenges new DEA interim final rule on how EPA would handle statutory changes to the Controlled Substances Act made in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (the farm bill). The farm bill deregulated hemp production based on a cannabis crop with .3% levels or lower of delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinols (THC) on a dry weight basis.

Higher levels of THC are what define hemp's cannabis cousin, marijuana, but the crops look identical.

Since Congress passed the 2018 farm bill, the selling and marketing of cannabidiol (CBD) products has soared and more farmers have tried to grow and sell hemp, based on changes in state laws. Farmers still face regulatory and possibly criminal challenges -- based on state and federal law enforcement -- depending on testing for THC content levels.

DEA makes it clear in its rule that cannabis products with THC above levels of .3% remain Schedule I controlled substances. But the DEA rule goes further to state that "the definition of hemp does not automatically exempt any product derived from a hemp plant, regardless of the (THC) content of the derivative." Every component and compound of the plant must fall under that .3% limit. So any product that goes above .3% is a controlled substance, even if the plant itself does not produce higher than .3% levels on a dry weight basis.

In their petition to the court, the Hemp Industries Association, and RE Botanicals Inc., a South Carolina-based company, argue that DEA isn't following the provisions in the 2018 farm bill. Specifically, DEA classifies waste hemp material, and intermediary hemp materials as Schedule I substances while the industry adds both kinds of materials are "necessary and inevitable byproducts of hemp processing." The trade association and company state Congress removed restrictions on commercial hemp activity from DEA's jurisdiction when Congress legalized hemp production, and processing in the farm bill.

The complaint states, "The DEA's interpretation of the 2018 Farm Bill "has serious, immediate, and irreparable consequences. (All) hemp processors and manufacturers who work with and/or store IHM and/or WHM must now choose between ceasing to process, manufacture and/or store hemp; obtaining a Schedule I license from DEA; or risking criminal prosecution under the (Controlled Substances Act). Given the centrality of hemp processing to the hemp industry's supply chain, forcing processors to choose between the foregoing options would effectively destroy the entire hemp industry."

The industry group and company stated, "DEA's latest jurisdictional overstep threatens every stage of the hemp production supply chain and jeopardizes the entire hemp industry," according to the complaint. "If allowed to stand, DEA's intrusion will undermine a lynchpin of the new hemp economy that has created tens of thousands of new jobs and provided a lucrative new crop for America's struggling farmers."

While the industry has turned to the DC Circuit Court on this, it's also likely there is some lobbying in Congress as well. The hemp provisions in the farm bill were led by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and the Kentucky congressional delegation. If DEA begins pushing the industry on this, it's possible more legislation may be needed to clarify regulatory authority.

A survey of 47 states by Hemp Industry Daily reported hemp production was 465,787 acres for 2020, down 9% from 2019, but the number of states allowing hemp production has expanded, and more producers are raising hemp this year. Hemp Industry Daily reported 21,496 licensed growers, up 27% from last year.

Illegal Air Pollution in Texas 2020

<https://environmenttexascenter.org/reports/txc/illegal-air-pollution-texas-2020>

Released by: Environment Texas Research and Policy Center

Release date: Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Executive Summary

From the oilfields of West Texas to the industrial facilities of the Gulf Coast, Texas is home to an abundance of oil, gas, and petrochemical operations, which frack and refine natural gas, ship oil across the state, manufacture plastic, and more. Every year, according to documents the companies file with the state of Texas, these facilities release millions of pounds of pollution in violation of their permits through "upsets" or "emissions events." These unauthorized air pollution events emit known toxins such as butadiene, benzene, particulate matter, and hydrogen sulfide, and they often do so in close proximity to residential neighborhoods, schools, and other populated areas, putting Texans at risk of harmful health impacts.

According to our analysis of violations self-reported by companies to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, industrial facilities released over 174 million pounds of unauthorized air pollution in 2019, an increase of 155 percent since 2015.

In 2019, companies reported 4,086 breakdowns, malfunctions, and other unauthorized air pollution events that resulted in the release of over 174 million pounds of illegal air pollution.

Carbon dioxide emissions composed nearly half of this pollution, or approximately 74 million pounds. A single facility -- Beaumont Gas to Gasoline Plant in Jefferson County -- was responsible for over 71 million pounds of all unauthorized carbon dioxide emissions statewide.

Unauthorized carbon dioxide pollution, as discussed in this report, is a relatively new phenomenon as facilities start to get greenhouse gas permits. For example, the Beaumont Gas to Gasoline Plant only opened in 2018 and is responsible for the vast majority of total unauthorized carbon dioxide emissions. However, even when Beaumont Gas to Gasoline Plant is excluded, air pollution increased 50% from 2015 and 100% from 2016.

[figure1.PNG](#)

Pollution linked to cancer and other health problems

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found in a 2013 study that more than 14,000 Texans lose their lives each year due to air pollution, including 3,583 Texans who die prematurely due to particulate matter released by authorized and unauthorized industrial emissions.

Scientists at Environmental Defense Fund and Harvard University found that in the Greater Houston area, 5,213 Texans died prematurely due to particulate matter exposure in 2015 and that this pollution resulted in over \$49 billion in associated economic damages.

According to the UT School of Public Health, children living within two miles of the heavily industrialized Houston Ship Channel face a 56 percent greater risk of contracting leukemia, which researchers link to oil refineries and chemical plants.

Pollution increases have coincided with weakening of federal air protections

EPA enforcement is at a record low nationally. And in Texas, EPA levied just 15 clean air enforcement actions each year on average from 2017 to 2019, compared with 24 per year from 2014 to 2016, a drop of 38%.

Since 2017, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has repealed or significantly weakened more than a dozen air quality and chemical safeguards for industrial facilities, including weakening air pollution monitoring requirements for refineries and rolling back safety standards adopted after a chemical plant exploded in Texas in 2013.

The EPA withdrew its plan to end the “affirmative defense” loophole, which allows polluters to escape financial penalties if they meet certain criteria. In 2019, companies claimed the affirmative defense 97% of the time, according to TCEQ data.

[figure2.PNG](#)

Texas acknowledges enforcement efforts have been lagging

The EPA shares joint regulatory oversight of Texas industrial facilities with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), whose Executive Director admitted last month that enforcement efforts in Texas have “been lagging.” He described the rash of high profile chemical disasters in 2019 as “incompatible with TCEQ’s mission.”

In contrast to the decline in EPA enforcement, TCEQ enforcement actions doubled from 2017 to 2019. Still, less than 3% of emissions violations drew any penalties from TCEQ or the State of Texas.

Illegal air pollution events happen daily across Texas.

Every single day in 2019, at least one industrial facility was responsible for an unauthorized air pollution event somewhere in Texas.

In TCEQ's Midland region, one or more unauthorized air pollution events happened every single day in 2019. TCEQ's Houston and Corpus Christi regions had unauthorized air pollution events on 357 and 351 calendar days out of the year, respectively.

[figure3.PNG](#)

Oil and gas facilities top lists of worst illegal polluters in 2019

The Intercontinental Terminals Deer Park Terminal facility in Harris County released more benzene, particulate matter and volatile organic compounds as a result of a fire at its facility in March of 2019 than the total annual volume of unauthorized emissions of any other facility in the state during 2019. This single event -- which lasted from March 17, 2019 to July 1, 2019 -- released 15 million pounds of unauthorized air pollution, double the pollution from all unauthorized emissions in the Houston region in 2018.

The TPC Port Neches facility released 664,184 pounds of pollution when it caught fire and exploded in late 2019. According to the company's report to TCEQ, the emissions event from the TPC explosion lasted from November 27, 2019 to March 30, 2020, and over half of the pollution released was particulate matter, or soot.

[table1.PNG](#)

In order to reduce illegal air pollution and hold violators accountable, the state and federal governments should:

Eliminate the "affirmative defense" loophole

Adopt mandatory minimum penalties for unauthorized air pollution events including from upset events, as well as unscheduled MSS (Maintenance, Startup and Shutdown) activities or planned MSS activities such as equipment maintenance

Increase inspections and monitoring

Improve the TCEQ STEERS database reporting system and instructions so that facilities report uniformly, accurately and in a way that enables citizens to easily determine the amount and type of pollution released during unauthorized events

Require that polluting facilities share information and emergency response plans with neighbors in case of explosions or chemical disasters

Ozone/Clean Air Act: NESCAUM Comments on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Proposal to Retain Current National Ambient Air Quality Standard

<https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/ozone-clean-air-act-nescaum-comments-on-63274/>

By

[Mitchell, Williams, Selig, Gates & Woodyard, P.L.L.C.](#)

[Walter Wright](#)

13 Oct 2020

The Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management ("NESCAUM") submitted October 1st comments on the United States Environmental Protection Agency's ("EPA") proposal titled:

Review of the Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards, Proposed Action (“Ozone Proposal”)

The Ozone Proposal is found at 85 Fed. Reg. 49830-49917 (August 14, 2020).

The Ozone Proposal would leave in place the ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (“NAAQS”) promulgated by the Obama Administration in 2015.

NESCAUM describes itself as the regional association of air pollution control agencies representing Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Ozone is an irritant gas. It is not emitted by any particular source and is, therefore, a secondary air pollutant. The air pollutant is formed in the atmosphere in the presence of sunlight and heat from other precursor air pollutants including nitrogen oxide and hydrocarbons. The photochemical reactions can vary because they are initiated by natural conditions such as sunlight and temperature which can, obviously, change. As a result, the rate of formation can differ on an hourly, daily, or seasonal basis.

Ozone was designated many years ago pursuant to the Clean Air Act 108/109 NAAQS review process as a criteria air pollutant. The Clean Air Act requires that EPA periodically review each NAAQS to determine, based on evolving science, etc., if it should be revised.

Once a NAAQS is established, the states are required to develop and implement state implementation plans (“SIPs”) to ensure that its air quality control regions met the NAAQS. As a result, once EPA has established a NAAQS, each state is required to formulate, subject to EPA approval, SIPs designed to achieve each standard. The SIPs will contain the measures and actions the state proposes to undertake to attain each NAAQS.

A change in a NAAQS may require a revision in the SIP. The SIPs and/or revisions must be adopted pursuant to public notice and hearing and include various substantive requirements.

By way of introduction, NESCAUM notes that a wide range of standards are tied to the ozone NAAQS. It, therefore, states that:

... failure to adopt adequate NAAQS significantly hampers states’ abilities to protect the health and welfare of their residents. A protective national standard is particularly essential for ozone because ambient levels of that pollutant are strongly influenced by interstate transport of ozone and its precursors. States cannot achieve clean air within their borders without national requirements that limit interstate impacts.

The NESCAUM comments raise three principal issues:

1. The NAAQS review process was compromised by the imposition of a highly compressed schedule which limited opportunities for Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) review and public comment and resulted in inappropriate mixing of science and policy.
2. The review process was further compromised by EPA’s replacement of all members of the CASAC and its failure to form a supporting CASAC advisory panel of experts.
3. A robust review process is essential to ascertain whether the proposed ozone NAAQS provides adequate protection of public health and welfare, as mandated by the Clean Air Act

A copy of the comments can be downloaded [here](#).

<https://www.nj.com/opinion/2020/10/nj-toxic-site-cleanup-wont-go-far-enough-letter.html>

By South Jersey Times Letters

13 Oct 2020

Finally, on Sept. 28, Hercules LLC reached an \$11.3 million consent decree with the Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Protection to clean up the mess the chemical company made in Gibbstown.

This is one of the state's worst Superfund sites, created by contaminating groundwater with lead, benzene and other hazardous and cancer-causing chemicals. The EPA's previously announced cleanup plan was not a real one. Now we need to get it right and have a complete plan that will not rely on natural attenuation (treating the hazardous materials in place) or institutional controls like capping the site.

Toxic chemicals are located under the site's tar pits and pose a serious threat to the community and the environment. Benzene can affect people's immune system, increase their chance of infection and even cause cancer. If the contamination on the site migrates, local wells may be threatened. Also, pollutants can leach from the disposal area into the surrounding wetlands or Clonmell Creek and impact wildlife.

In order for this new remediation plan to fully clean up this site, we need to remove the contaminated soil underneath it. (The plan calls for only lead-tainted soil to be taken off-site.) Caps can fail and undo all of the progress of the cleanup.

Hercules should be held accountable for the cleanup of this Superfund site. However, as a one-time subsidiary of the DuPont Co., they should also be responsible for cleaning up the Repauno Works site just a mile away. Instead, they're selling the property to Delaware River Partners to build a disastrous liquified natural gas export facility that will put the entire area at risk.

Maintaining that the Catholic Diocese of Camden is short on assets, as it did with its recent bankruptcy filing, is laughable. Many people do not realize that this diocese owns millions of dollars in property, as do many other dioceses.

While it did not belong to the Camden Diocese, another Catholic entity once owned a massive retreat on the beachfront in Ocean City. Its condition did not rival Ritz-Carlton-type comforts, but that didn't matter much in terms of its value. An order of sisters operates another retreat, which includes a conference center that is available for a fee for outside groups' use, on Long Beach Island.

About 20 years ago, I worked with a young lady who was a Harvard student. She and I discussed how Harvard has many support services for its student body, including counseling for those overly stressed by its academic challenges, and access to great medical care. The students receive these services in large part because the university's endowment — estimated at \$41 billion — pays for them. It's the nation's largest higher-education endowment.

Perhaps just one other non-profit entity in the world has more monetary value than Harvard, so much that many consider it impossible to estimate the amount. What might that entity be? Well, its current leader now comes from Argentina. A former one was named John Paul. Anyone want to guess?

Tougher Emissions Rules Sought for Plants Spewing Cancer-Causing Pollution

<https://www.courthousenews.com/tougher-emissions-rules-sought-for-plants-spewing-cancer-causing-pollution/>

October 13, 2020

ERIKA WILLIAMS

(CN) — Eleven environmental justice and rights groups joined forces Tuesday to sue the Environmental Protection Agency over what they call weak rules for chemical facilities that pump out pollutants linked to cancer.

Attorneys with Earthjustice, on behalf of several environmental organizations out of Texas and Louisiana, filed a petition asking the D.C. Circuit to review the EPA's final rule on emissions at chemical plants.

They say the Miscellaneous Organic Chemical Manufacturing, or MON, rule, which regulates emissions for about 200 chemical plants across the country, allows for dangerous levels of toxic emissions to spill into neighboring communities.

Specifically, the MON rule leaves people in surrounding areas with a cancer risk rate of 200 in 1 million, twice the level that EPA deems unacceptable under the Clean Air Act, Earthjustice claims.

The hazardous air pollutants that are emitted from MON facilities include toluene, methanol, xylene, hydrogen chloride and methylene chloride, according to the EPA.

The agency says exposure to these substances "may cause adverse health effects such as irritation of the lung, eye, and mucous membranes, effects on the central nervous system, and cancer."

Most of these chemical plants are concentrated in Texas and Louisiana, and the environmental groups say their emissions disproportionately affect Black, Latino and low-income communities.

The EPA updated its rule after a national air toxins assessment released earlier this year showed pollution from these plants is contributing to cancer hotspots. But the environmentalists say it's not enough.

"EPA recognizes that communities are facing a blatantly unacceptable cancer threat from breathing toxic air every day, yet it does little to fix this problem," Earthjustice attorney Emma Cheuse said in a statement Tuesday.

She added, "It's unjust and wrong that the agency is again refusing to set standards that fully protect children and families living next to petrochemical sources."

Earthjustice claims the current MON rule allows for repeated unmonitored release of chemical pollution from the factories, even if pollution levels in the area are too high.

"Our neighborhoods are not sacrifice zones for petrochemical companies. EPA's national air toxics standards must be the strongest necessary to prevent cancers that EPA itself says the pollution from these chemical plants can cause. Those of us in Louisiana have seen first-hand the type of harm this type of pollution can do to communities," said Sharon Lavigne, founder of grassroots organization RISE St. James.

Lavigne's organization, which is a plaintiff in Tuesday's case, is currently fighting the industry in Louisiana state court over a proposed 14-plant Formosa Plastics petrochemical complex in St. James Parish. The majority-Black area is already dubbed "Cancer Alley" due to high levels of industrial fumes.

"A weak MON chemical plant rule is disastrous for the health of St. James Parish, particularly if plans for the Formosa complex are allowed to proceed," Earthjustice said in a statement announcing the petition, adding that the proposed complex would be located just a mile from an elementary school in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

Besides Texas and Louisiana, facilities that emit cancer-causing pollutants are also located in West Virginia, Illinois and South Carolina, according to the environmentalists.

Other groups pushing for review of EPA's rule on Tuesday include Louisiana Environmental Action Network; Louisiana Bucket Brigade; Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services; Air Alliance Houston; Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition; Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League; Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform; Environmental Integrity Project; Union of Concerned Scientists; and the Sierra Club.

"The EPA rule does not go far enough to reduce toxic air pollution and goes too far in allowing loopholes, including an unlimited number of so-called unforeseeable accidents known as force majeure. The problem is not acts of God, it is acts of man," Louis Zeller, executive director of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, said in a statement on the lawsuit.

A reelected Trump's climate control

<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/the-long-game/2020/10/13/a-reelected-trump-climate-control-490575>

By CATHERINE BOUDREAU and ALEX GUILLEN

10/13/2020 01:11 PM EDT

FOUR MORE YEARS — With exactly three weeks until Election Day, the outcome on Nov. 3 is one of the most consequential events in the fight against global warming. In order to avoid the worst effects, including more intense heat waves and rising sea levels that cause more destructive floods, the consensus among climate scientists is that humans need to all but eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Reelecting Donald Trump would put America, and possibly other countries, on a hard-to-reverse course away from that goal. A recent promise by China to decarbonize by 2060 would also leave the U.S. isolated as other powers rewrite the rules of the global carbon economy, [your host and Karl Mathiesen report for POLITICO Magazine](#). Reporters in the U.S. and Europe spoke to experts and decision-makers around the world about what four more years of Trump would mean for policies ranging from climate to public health to trade deals.

When it comes to global climate diplomacy, Trump's second term would be particularly transformational. Thanks to the design of the Paris climate agreement, the U.S. won't officially pull out until Nov. 4, the day after the election. And Trump's presidency has coincidentally aligned with a fallow period in that deal: Most of the nearly 200 signatories won't outline new pledges until next year. What the U.S. does is critical, not only because it's the world's second-largest polluter, but because other top emitters like China and India are watching closely. China's emissions are now so vast — more than a quarter of global greenhouse gases — that the consequences of even a few lost years would be enormous.

China could also fill a gap left by Trump's abandonment of the international arena. President Xi Jinping's surprising climate announcement last month could provide an opening with the European Union, which is on a slightly more aggressive trajectory. The world's second- and third-largest economies could work together in a way they haven't before on climate policy.

"China, the EU and other leaders are going to be putting their minds to, 'OK, we have to live in a world without America. Maybe someday [they will] be back, but we really can't wait,'" says Todd Stern, U.S. climate envoy under Barack Obama.

At home, Trump has no climate agenda. The Republican National Convention adopted no new platform this year, deciding to renew the version from four years ago. The administration, [in a brief list of "core priorities" for](#)

its second-term agenda, made no mention of climate change. The president plans to continue his “deregulatory agenda for energy independence.”

"Under my administration, we have achieved energy independence," Trump said during a rally in Pennsylvania last month, a statement PolitiFact has rated as a half-truth. "And remember, I am not the candidate ... that said we're not going to have fracking." However, Joe Biden has repeatedly denied he would ban fracking.

There are signs that even with Trump in the White House, the U.S. can slash its emissions. America's renewable energy consumption surpassed coal last year for the first time in more than a century. A sharp decline in the prices of natural gas and renewables over the past decade enabled the U.S. to replace large amounts of coal, a trend that has helped keep total the country's emissions largely flat since Trump took office. Still, fossil fuels, including natural gas and oil, still account for nearly 70 percent of energy consumption.

Last year, New York committed to net-zero emissions by 2050, and Washington state this year set the same target. California is aiming for 2045, while Virginia plans to transition to 100 percent renewable energy by that date.

These trends are despite Trump's agenda, and proof of “the invisible hand of the market turning green,” said Matthias Berninger, senior vice president of public affairs and sustainability at Bayer AG. He said businesses will advance their sustainability promises through international conferences and NGOs during a Trump second term.

“We hope for the US to reengage in global health and sustainability, including the Paris climate agreement,” Berninger added. “That way ... a leading emitter of carbon can help shape the agenda in ways that work for the U.S.”

Even so, many climate experts see a Trump victory as a moment to panic. No less than the future of the planet hinges on this presidential election, says Michael Mann, a prominent climate scientist whose research has helped inform the U.N.'s landmark reports on climate change. Without a clear national framework, the pace of change won't be fast enough for the U.S. to decarbonize by midcentury.

Welcome to The Long Game! Be sure to catch up on our last issue, on the challenges of holding companies accountable to deforestation pledges, in case you missed it. We want to know what you think and what we're missing. We won't take anything personally, promise. Send tips, critiques and all your sustainability questions — and answers — to cboudreau@politico.com. Find me on Twitter [@cboudreau](https://twitter.com/cboudreau). Did someone forward this to you? [Subscribe here!](#)

MEA CULPA — In last week's issue, we misreported Nestlé's participation in The Consumer Goods Forum's deforestation initiatives. The company was a member in 2010 and this year. Also, Nigel Sizer's correct title is chief program officer at the Rainforest Alliance.

This week, we want to know: Congress is sharply divided over climate legislation. Republican lawmakers characterize Democratic proposals as "radical," while Democrats often write off GOP plans as inadequate. What do you think can break the logjam? How might the debate be reframed? Tell us, and we may feature your answer in a future edition of The Long Game!

Senators from both parties acknowledged Amy Coney Barrett would inevitably be confirmed, and the stakes are high both politically and for the future of climate policy. | Erin Schaff/The New York Times via AP, Pool

HIGH SCOTUS STAKES — The Senate Judiciary Committee kicked off its confirmation hearings on Monday for Trump's nominee to the Supreme Court, Amy Coney Barrett. Senators from both parties acknowledged she

would inevitably be confirmed, and the stakes are high both politically — with Republicans hoping the vacancy will energize voters — and for the future of climate policy.

Litigation over environmental laws has been a hallmark of the Trump administration. And while it hasn't been a major focus of Barrett's tenure in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, her judicial philosophy offers some hints. Barrett is considered a constitutional "originalist" and long advocated for justices to be more willing to overturn past legal precedents.

This could apply to the high court's 2007 decision in *Massachusetts v. EPA*, which ruled that EPA had the authority to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. At least two justices still on the court have signaled interest in revisiting the climate ruling: Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas. No case has advanced far enough for SCOTUS to take a position on the scope of EPA's authority, but if Trump is reelected, there may be an opening.

What else is on deck? SCOTUS earlier this month said it will hear an appeal from oil companies aiming to quash a lawsuit brought by the city of Baltimore that seeks compensation for damages from climate change. The case is seen as a bellwether for the growing litany of such climate change lawsuits against fossil fuel companies.

THE STATUS OF MAJOR POLLUTION CASES — In his first term, Trump repealed at least 100 environmental rules, including the Obama administration's signature climate policy, the Clean Power Plan. But the majority of these rollbacks remain in limbo after successful challenges by states and green groups, according to an analysis by the Institute for Policy Integrity.

A second term would give Trump more time to defend his deregulatory agenda in court and lock in rules that allow more pollution from power plants, leaking oil and gas wells, and cars and refrigerants. If these rollbacks remain in place, U.S. emissions 15 years from now will be 3 percent higher than current projections indicate, per a recent report by the research firm Rhodium Group.

The Long Game reviewed the standing of three major court battles that could shape America's ability to address climate change.

Power plant pollution: The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals last week heard challenges to the Trump administration's Affordable Clean Energy rule, also known as its replacement of the Obama-era Clean Power Plan. The most critical issue is how the court defines the boundaries of EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide.

In setting more lax limits on carbon pollution, Trump's EPA argued its authority is limited to individual coal power plants, known as "inside the fenceline." However, the Obama rule saw the electric grid as a large system and took an approach that would have curbed emissions from the sector overall — or "outside the fenceline" — and pushed high-emitting coal plants into retirement. After nine hours of oral arguments on Thursday, it was clear that a three-judge panel was frustrated with Trump's less stringent limits on pollution, raising the possibility that they may send EPA back to the drawing board.

Any ruling will likely take months to come out, so the results of the presidential election could play a major role in the future of this case. If Biden wins and moves to undo the Trump administration's version, the court may never reveal its opinion.

Methane emissions: In August, EPA finalized rules rescinding methane limits for new oil and gas wells and eased monitoring and repair requirements aimed at preventing leaks of the potent greenhouse gas. This triggered a lawsuit by a coalition of environmental groups, and the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals granted their request for a temporary stay. That means the rules won't take effect while the litigation plays out.

In total, EPA estimated its rollback will allow about 850,000 tons of methane to be released into the atmosphere, the equivalent of 19 million tons of carbon dioxide, between 2021 and 2030. The oil-and-gas sector will save upward of \$1 billion in compliance costs over that time frame.

The presidential election factors into this case, as well. If Democrats have full control of Congress and the White House, lawmakers could nullify EPA's methane rollback under the Congressional Review Act. Under that law, Congress has 60 days from when a rule takes effect to pass a joint resolution voiding it.

California and 22 other states sued the Trump administration over its rollback of Obama-era rules to slash emissions from cars and light trucks — the largest source of U.S. emissions. | Karen Ducey/Getty Images

Auto industry: In May, California and 22 other states sued the Trump administration over its rollback of Obama-era rules to slash emissions from cars and light trucks — the largest source of U.S. emissions. Trump's version requires automakers to improve their average fleetwide fuel economy to 40 mpg, while the previous iteration would have directed an improvement of about 54 mpg by 2025. The case is before the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, and will play out the rest of the year.

Separately, California is suing EPA over its denial of a waiver allowing the state to enforce its own pollution limits on tail pipes that are stricter than the national standard. Arguments in that case are likely in December or early 2021.

EPA's methane rollback eyes future hurdles for climate rules

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/13/epa-methane-rollback-climate-rules-429188>

By ALEX GUILLEN

10/13/2020 11:15 AM EDT

EPA finalized a rollback of Obama-era methane limits on new oil and gas wells on Thursday and teed up future EPA action to set the threshold at which EPA must regulate such greenhouse gas emissions — a move environmentalists warn is an attempt to head off efforts by future administrations to curb emissions from other industries.

The “contributes significantly” threshold: The Clean Air Act says EPA can issue rules limiting any air pollutant that “contributes significantly” to a danger to public health or welfare.

The final Trump rules (Reg. 2060-AT90), (Reg. 2060-AT54) conclude that the Obama administration did not properly make that finding when it extended emissions rules in 2016 to cover the transmission and storage sectors of the natural gas industry, even though EPA estimated at the time it would target 3.4 percent of domestic greenhouse gas emissions and 0.5 percent of global emissions.

“The EPA intends to begin rulemaking shortly to identify thresholds and/or criteria and to apply them in future significance determinations,” the final rule said. A spokesperson said EPA plans to issue a proposal later this year.

Asked why EPA didn't simply make that finding under this rulemaking, a senior EPA official told reporters on a conference call that “we were mostly focusing on fixing the problems of the past so we can move forward with a more balanced rulemaking that better aligned with the requirements laid out in the Clean Air Act.”

Rescinding methane limits: The rules also remove methane-specific limits imposed on newly built production and processing facilities, including wells, after concluding the limits are “redundant.” Pollution control

technologies that capture VOCs also capture methane, and so rescinding the methane-specific limits while leaving the VOC rules in place "will not affect the amount of methane emission reductions that those requirements will achieve," EPA said.

Leak detection and repair: Changes to these requirements are projected to save the oil and gas industry as much as \$1 billion in compliance costs over the next decade.

The rule maintains twice-yearly monitoring requirements for wells but eases the schedule for compressor stations from quarterly to semi-annually. It excludes low-production wells that pump out less than 15 barrels of oil equivalent per day. Companies can stop leak detection once production and processing equipment is removed and it becomes a "wellhead-only" site.

It also gives companies extra time to repair leaks if it would not be "technically feasible" within 30 days.

Other changes: The rule allows companies to follow some states' leak repair regulations that it says are as protective as the federal ones. The agency says states can follow well site and compressor station rules in California, Colorado, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas, and well site rules only in Utah.

Targeting record keeping and reporting requirements that it called "convoluted," EPA made changes that it projects will save industry \$107 per site per year, about a 25 percent reduction.

Costs and benefits: In total, EPA's rollback will forego capturing 850,000 tons of methane, the equivalent of 19 million tons of carbon dioxide, between 2021 and 2030. EPA projects the lost climate benefits over the decade will be as high as \$130 million, though that's limited to domestic benefits, not global benefits.

The rules would also lead to an additional 140,000 tons of volatile organic compounds, a class of pollutants that are a precursor to ground-level ozone, and 5,000 tons of hazardous air pollutants. EPA did not quantify those impacts.

EPA estimated its rules would save oil and gas companies almost \$1 billion over the next decade, even after factoring in foregone revenue from the lost methane.

Depending on discount rate, EPA said the rules will lead to net benefits of \$750 million to \$850 million annually, due to significant reductions in costs from technical changes to leak inspection frequency.

A Secret Weapon in the Fight against COVID-19

<https://www.waterworld.com/wastewater/article/14184342/a-secret-weapon-in-the-fight-against-covid19>

By Alanna Maya

Oct 13th, 2020

The University of Arizona may have stopped a potential coronavirus outbreak earlier this year by testing dormitory wastewater for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Just days after students returned for the start of the fall semester, sewage testing showed the presence of the virus' RNA in raw wastewater samples from a particular dorm. The university tested all residents of the dorm and found two people who were asymptomatic but positive for the virus. Those students — who had tested negative prior to move-in — were then quarantined to stop others from becoming infected.

“We identified the [presence of] coronavirus in the sewer line coming out of one of the dormitories, and we estimated by the flow from that sewer line that there were somewhere between two and five people infected out of about 327,” Charles Gerba, professor of environmental microbiology with the University of Arizona, said.

“Sure enough, when the university infection control panel went and tested everybody for the virus, they found two people that were infected. They were removed from the dormitory, and when we tested the wastewater again the next day, it was negative.”

Since the initial test, Gerba says the University has continued to monitor wastewater on campus this way, then testing and removing infected individuals from on campus housing until they are well again.

“Because we have a confined population, you can determine [infection cases] by taking one sample once a day, and then if anybody is infected, [we can remove] them from the dorm so it doesn’t spread,” he said.

Wastewater tests also recently flagged the possible presence of the virus at University of Colorado residence halls, and at the University of California-San Diego. Several countries — including the Netherlands and Italy — and some U.S. cities have employed the practice of wastewater epidemiology, also called “sewage surveillance,” to understand infection rates because wastewater can signal infections up to one week before an individual might test positive with clinical testing.

Research, including a study released in September by Yale University and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station say widespread wastewater testing can act as an early warning system for communities, and could provide better estimates for how widespread the coronavirus is because the practice would include samples from people who have not been tested and have only mild or no symptoms.

“Depending on the level of virus in the sewage, wastewater testing can also be a leading indicator of a worsening outbreak,” according the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). And, though it is not intended to replace clinical testing, it can help communities where COVID-19 tests are underutilized or unavailable.

At the University of Arizona’s Water and Energy Sustainable Technology (WEST) Center, Gerba said wastewater testing has been used for two purposes.

“One, to ensure [the virus is being effectively] removed by our wastewater treatment plants, but also to monitor the wastewater here and looking at the impact of interventions,” he said. “For instance, when the pandemic first started, we saw the rapid rise [of infections] in Tucson in the sewage. When stay at home orders went into effect, levels [of the virus in sewage] went way down.”

Around the Fourth of July, when the stay at home orders had been lifted for some time, Tucson’s sewage told researchers another surge of infections was imminent. Likewise, the levels of the virus’ RNA in sewage have gone down as mask mandates have gone into effect, providing “a clear indication of how well interventions are working, as well as future warning signs in our community,” Gerba said.

While wastewater testing could be a sensitive tool to monitor the circulation of the virus in a population, the method remains imprecise. It can spot infection trends, but it can’t yet consistently pinpoint the number of people with the virus or the infected individual’s stage of infection. That means it’s not yet quite as useful on a larger scale in cities, which don’t always have a university’s scientific resources or the ability to require people to get tested.

Still, data from sewage has a role to play in combating the virus around the world. MIT-affiliated Cambridge, Mass.-based lab Biobot Analytics first successfully quantified SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater in March 2020. Since then, the company has worked with hundreds of communities across the United States and Canada to map

the novel coronavirus concentrations in sewage over time, generating data representing over 10 percent of the U.S. population and 5 percent of the Canadian population.

“We believe that sewage offers a unique opportunity to make public health more data-driven and effective,” the company’s website says.

The Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department has been working with Biobot since late March, sampling raw wastewater at each of its three treatment plants every hour for a 24-hour period and then shipping those samples to Biobot’s labs. By comparing new samples to previous ones, Biobot scientists have been able to tell Miami-Dade officials if levels of the virus’ RNA are higher or lower than in previous samples. Officials can then compare this information to public health data for a comprehensive snapshot of infection levels in the areas surrounding each of the utility’s plants.

Miami-Dade’s South District Wastewater Treatment Plant is one of three facilities tracking coronavirus infections through wastewater sampling. Photo courtesy Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department.

“In general, when it’s been presumed that a lot of people are infected in the county, you really do see a reflection of that in the [wastewater testing] data,” Kevin Lynskey, director of the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department, said. “In periods when there’s presumed to be a low infection rate based on [clinical] testing, it’s pretty consistent there, too.”

Lynskey said the data between large spikes (up or down) in infection rates is still valuable information to have.

“What I think our utility has been finding, along with all the other utilities [conducting this research] is that the information that comes out of the sampling programs is valuable directionally,” he said. “We know that there’s some work to be done, but if you average [our] three plants into one picture, the data has been fairly consistent with what we found in that community.”

A nationwide standard of wastewater-testing could alleviate some of the inconsistencies in results, but developing the protocol, especially considering other limitations around medical testing for the novel virus, will take time.

Today, the two most prominent testing methods are qPCR and digital droplet testing, but even within those two camps, there are multiple variations on how these testing methods are employed. For example, some laboratories are testing wastewater solids, while others test liquid samples taken at different stages in the treatment process. Some facilities require the samples to be pasteurized prior to testing, while others test raw wastewater. All of this can impact the strength of the virus’s RNA signal.

In a recent international summit on COVID-19, the Water Research Foundation (WRF) convened experts from around the globe to conduct a laboratory methods assessment to understand the factors that affect detection of the virus in wastewater samples.

“There is real potential behind sewershed surveillance,” John Albert, WRF’s chief research officer, said following the summit.

Photo courtesy Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department. Photo courtesy Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department.

With several research projects underway, WRF is working with the CDC and U.S. EPA to develop minimum data requirements for COVID-19 detection in wastewater.

“In this short amount of time, the amount of resources that we were able to get together across the country and ask these critical research questions of, and the amount of research groups working on this is simply amazing.

And to advance the analysis and really, the testing, so quickly, really shows that this concept of sewershed surveillance is here to stay.”

Albert said the next step is to establish a closer working relationship between public health agencies and wastewater utilities on the implementation of best practices for sample collection, analysis, and interpretation, and speedy and appropriate translation and communication of results to public health decision-makers.

With the coronavirus threat still looming, he said, sewage surveillance could become a “helpful addition in the public health toolkit.” WW

About the Author: Alanna Maya is editor of WaterWorld magazine. She can be reached at amaya@endeavorb2b.com.

URW gets EPA award for use of green power

<https://chainstorage.com/urw-gets-epa-award-use-green-power>

By [Al Urbanski](#) - 10/13/2020

Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield has received the Excellence in Green Power Use award from the United States Environmental Protection Agency for its aggressive use of alternative power sources in its malls.

More than 54% of energy usage in the company’s malls is emission-free due to the deployment of on-site solar energy, the purchase of renewable energy certificate (REC) products, and green power. URW’s REC purchases addressed 50% of emissions from its properties in 2020.

URW was one of only four organizations in the county to be so honored this year, the others being Aldi, General Motors, and St. Louis University.

“Today’s announcement is a powerful validation of our Better Places 2030 CSR strategy to reduce greenhouse emissions 50 percent by the year 2030 in order to safeguard the communities we serve and protect our environment for future generations,” said Paul Kurzawa, executive VP of U.S. operations.

Gulf Coast Sequestration Makes Initial Filing to Obtain EPA Permit for CCS Project

<https://www.accountability-central.com/nc/single-view-default/article/gulf-coast-sequestration-makes-initial-filing-to-obtain-epa-permit-for-ccs-project/>

October 13, 2020 8:55 AM

LAKE CHARLES, La.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Gulf Coast Sequestration (GCS) today announced that the company has initiated the process for obtaining a Class VI Underground Injection Control permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by filing a detailed technical submission to delineate its “area of review.” This is a significant step in the company’s effort to build and operate the country’s premier carbon sequestration project, which is designed to permanently store more than 80 million tons of carbon in deep geologic formations.

Once completed, the GCS “hub” is expected to be the largest geologic carbon capture sequestration (CCS) project in the U.S. and one of the largest in the world. With the capacity to sequester 2,700,000 tons of CO?

annually, it will be equivalent to removing about 600,000 passenger vehicles from the road every year or the equivalent annual carbon avoided from 2,000 wind turbines.

The filing marks a milestone for GCS, which controls both the surface and subsurface rights for a large, contiguous landholding in southwest Louisiana. The permit application comes after years of comprehensive data collection and analysis which determined that the area's geologic pore space is ideally suited to build and operate a world-class carbon sequestration project.

"This filing is a long time coming and an exciting moment for GCS," said Gray Stream, President of Matilda Stream Management, Inc., the owner of GCS. "We have done our homework, and our permit application reflects our commitment to robust environmental compliance. We look forward to working with EPA to secure the approvals needed to develop, construct, and operate one of the leading carbon sequestration projects in the world."

Located in close proximity to one of the nation's busiest industrial corridors, GCS will partner with industrial customers to capture CO₂ and safely contain it underground. In recent years, technological developments and new federal tax credits have made it economically attractive for some industrial facilities to install CCS systems to dramatically reduce their CO₂ emissions.

"At GCS, we believe that CCS is the best way to tackle industrial greenhouse gas emissions," said GCS principal Benjamin Heard. "By providing safe and secure storage for carbon dioxide, GCS will assist industrial customers in achieving their sustainability goals. Working together, we can help to steer the United States toward a more economically and environmentally sustainable future."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that the costs of tackling climate change could more than double if CCS technology is not developed and widely deployed. The GCS project capitalizes on CCS's vital – and singular – capability for reducing the emissions from existing industrial facilities.

The team behind GCS includes several of the world's leading experts on carbon capture and sequestration who bring insight and experience on geology, petrophysics, seismic, and reservoir modeling and simulation as well as the complex legal and regulatory issues involved with a project of this size and scale.

More information about GCS is online at www.gcscarbon.com.

View source version on businesswire.com: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20201013005682/en/>

EPA's Benevento, Daines join Anaconda hotel groundbreaking

https://mtstandard.com/news/local/epas-benevento-daines-join-anaconda-hotel-groundbreaking/article_85a7806a-9edc-5e30-a45c-d069557fcfc4.html

By Meagan Thompson

13 Oct 2020

Progress rode into Anaconda on a sharp west wind Tuesday.

At a building site at Polk Street and Highway 1, gusts kept blowing down the pictures of the \$10 million Forge Hotel and new Barclay's II Restaurant, but there were plenty of hands to keep putting them back up. Best of all, the pictures were backed up by an EPA consent decree and settlement with the Smelter City, and real money.

Bill Everett, Anaconda Chief executive; Doug Benevento, acting Deputy Administrator of the EPA; and U.S. Sen. Steve Daines braved the wind to celebrate real accomplishment after nearly four decades of Superfund stasis.

Everett spoke of his frustration after taking over as chief executive in 2016.

I'm a businessman, not a government employee," he said, and when he first reached out to fellow businessmen to invest in Anaconda, he was told, the town is going in the wrong direction. You have blight, you have a Superfund mess, and you have no dollars to spend on economic development.

He credited his Anaconda team with addressing the blight. "Joe Ungaretti has torn down 79 derelict buildings and made it clear to people in Anaconda that it's no longer acceptable to have old dishwashers and sofas in the front yard.

"We've worked on 114 streets for the first time in 40 years, we have new streetlights. Wayne Wendt and his road department has done a great job."

But Everett said things really began to change when he met with EPA Region 8 Administrator Doug Benevento. The newly appointed Benevento had come to Butte but not to Anaconda, so Everett went to him. They had lunch at Taco del Sol, he said, and there, Everett said, "I made my emotions real clear."

Benevento responded, saying he would come to Anaconda, and he did.

"We took him to the stack, we took him to Benny Goodman Park where our children play. We showed him our houses and how much Anaconda needed action. 'It's been almost 40 years, sir, come on,' I told him."

As Superfund negotiations continued, Everett saw a difference.

"He got my team, EPA, Atlantic Richfield, DEQ together and he said get this done or I'm going to impose a unilateral order," Everett said. "I didn't know what a unilateral order was, but it scared me and it scared Atlantic Richfield, and we got a deal done."

Benevento laughed. He said, "Bill's recollection of events is accurate." He praised Everett, the Anaconda team, and Daines for keeping things moving forward.

Everett said the hotel project is just one of three huge development projects going on simultaneously. The other two are a \$3 million RV park being developed by Gary Chilcott and a \$2 million renovation of Old Works Golf Course, to include a "bar, restaurant, taproom, and inside golf," he said.

Everett said that as events progressed, he realized he needed more help. And so he called Daines.

"Pretty cool state, you can actually call your U.S. senator," Everett said.

He called Daines and Benevento "heroes of mine."

He said Daines has been enormously helpful in getting things going in Anaconda.

"Next thing we knew we had Sen. Daines and EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler in Anaconda."

Daines said, "I remember when I was in high school in Bozeman, Anaconda was an AA school and Bozeman was a small AA school. Hopefully we're on track now so that Anaconda will be an AA school again."

He praised Benevento and EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler for their work in Butte and Anaconda.

“I told Andrew Wheeler years ago that Anaconda and Butte were tired of EPA studies and reports, and we don’t need any more studies to gather dust on bookshelves, we need results.

“And that’s what we see here today.”

Daines said the projects in Anaconda represent “the biggest economic stimulus in Anaconda in 50 years.”

He said that soon, “grade school children will be able to think that they can stay in Anaconda instead of having to leave when it’s time for them to get good jobs and raise their own families.”

HRSD receives \$225 million loan from EPA to help replenish aquifer

<https://www.pilotonline.com/news/environment/vp-nw-hrsd-wheeler-20201013-tighkukqandv5ettzs72d3fiya-story.html>

By SALEEN MARTIN

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT |

OCT 13, 2020 AT 11:52 AM

Environmental Protection Agency administrator Andrew Wheeler presented the Hampton Roads Sanitation District with a \$225 million loan Tuesday to help with HRSD’s efforts to make sure there’s enough fresh water for future generations.

The money will support the Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow program, or SWIFT. It’s a long-term plan for converting sewage into drinking water, then injecting it back into the Potomac aquifer.

“There are many places like Suffolk in the Tidewater region that have seen your population grow over the past year, and this growth is expected to continue into the next several decades,” Wheeler said at the event, held outside of the SWIFT research center in Suffolk. “With this growth will come more demand for fresh water.”

The money will help to build wells to add high-quality water to the Potomac aquifer, which also will reduce surface water discharges into the Chesapeake Bay, Wheeler said.

The project and funds, he said, will save the sanitation district over \$72 million. They’ll also create 1,412 jobs.

“The Trump administration’s commitment to clean water, clean air and clean land has been demonstrated not just here in Virginia,” Wheeler said before noting that air pollution has fallen by 7% under Trump’s administration.

He also said that with President Donald Trump in office, the EPA has invested over \$40 billion into new water infrastructure.

Wheeler said the EPA has agreed to a \$1 billion master agreement to provide funding under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act.

SWIFT will cost about \$460 million, said Molly Block, a spokesperson for the EPA. Tuesday’s loan will cover about half of that, and it’s the first installment of many.

The other half of the cost will be made up by the Virginia Resources Authority and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

HRSD general manager Ted Henifin said that to date, the program has allowed HRSD to successfully return 375 million gallons of water to the "thirsty and overdrawn Potomac aquifer."

"It's the first step on our path to nearly 100 million gallons each day by 2032, ensuring a sustainable supply groundwater will be available for future generations."

Innovate Inc's Geospatial Services featured in NIH NITAAC CIOSP3 Solutions Showcase

<https://www.einpresswire.com/article/528316686/innovate-inc-s-geospatial-services-featured-in-nih-nitaac-ciosp3-solutions-showcase>

NEWS PROVIDED BY Innovate! Inc.

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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, October 13, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- NITAAC CIOSP3 Solutions Showcase selected Innovate! Inc. (Innovate) to represent the Federal Government's growing interest in incorporating geospatial services into their initiatives. The Showcase offers the Federal Government insight into the innovative quality Geospatial and IT solutions that Innovate delivers.

The Solutions Showcase highlights one of Innovate's projects with longtime client – US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Innovate's EPA Office of Water Fresh Water and Marine Beach Sanitary Survey Application is the project that NITAAC developed a video and blog post to describe. EPA uses the surveys to help waterbody managers evaluate all contributing waterbody and watershed information including water quality data, pollution source data, and land use data. The data from the App can be exported for use in predictive models and for sharing within or between agencies (e.g., public health and environmental).

Innovate was tasked to evaluate approaches and provide apps for both the annual and routine surveys that were scalable and able to evolve over time along with technology. The EPA requested that these formats be cost effective and not require extensive operations and maintenance. Innovate selected Esri's Survey123 to modernize the surveys because of the product's many benefits.

Innovate's Project Manager, Michael Blair, notes that "Prior to Survey123, individual state program partners had access to their own data, but sharing it required a state to voluntarily send data. The new ONE EPA GeoPlatform serves as a central repository instead. The new approach supports states and other users collectively sharing data. It also provides a stable platform for use across multiple devices and multiple operating systems." In addition to easier sharing and data downloads, the platform is compatible with all mobile/handheld devices, free to use and include photos, includes geolocation of beach and waterbody locations and internet/Wi-Fi is not required for field usage.

"It was an honor to be selected to represent the geospatial community and the impactful solutions integrating GIS can achieve. We are fortunate that we were able to bring our expertise with Esri's suite of products forward to support the EPA's mission," noted Frank Roberts, Innovate GIS/IT Director.

Innovate's application enables easy sharing from state partners into one central location, the ONE EPA GeoPlatform. The data collected can then be used by agencies and different jurisdictions to share trends, create predictive models and help with decision making in other ways.

To read more about Innovate's solution and view the video, please [visit our website](#). The video also can be viewed directly on [NITAAC's site](#).

About Innovate

Innovate is a leader in the geospatial industry, helping solve challenges within the community and deliver scalable solutions to our clients. Our team combines capabilities in software engineering, information technology, data, and environmental science with over 20 years of industry experience, resulting in elite technical expertise that our clients and partners trust, including Esri. We are an Esri Silver Level Business partner and participant in Esri's Beta testing program, which gives us direct insight into upcoming releases and products. Innovate earned the Esri 2020 Partner Award for Excellence in Collaboration for our leadership on the Department of Interior's (DOI) mission critical tool, the Integrated Reporting of Wildland Fire Information (IRWIN) application. We earned the 2018 Innovation Award for our Data Management Tool (DMT) and Locator applications for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Based on Innovate's achievements, our team is regularly requested to speak at Esri conferences, and our custom widgets are shared for free within the Esri community (e.g., our GroupedLayer for Esri WebApp Builder).

www.innovateteam.com

About NITAAC

NITAAC (NIH Information Technology Acquisition and Assessment Center) is housed within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and is a full service acquisition program that has been designated a federal Executive Agent, authorized by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to administer the Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) for information technology (IT) acquisitions. CIO-SP3 Small Business can be used by any Federal civilian or Department of Defense (DoD) agency to acquire information technology services, solutions, and commodities from pre-qualified vendors at lower than open market prices in less time than going the traditional full and open route. NITAAC maintains a full service assisted acquisition program for federal government partners.

Jaden Smith just expanded his mission to deliver clean water to disenfranchised communities

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90563232/jaden-smith-just-expanded-his-mission-to-deliver-clean-water-to-disenfranchised-communities>

BY KC IFEANYI

10-13-20 | 2:05 PM

Jaden Smith's mission to bring clean water to disenfranchised communities is expanding beyond Flint, Michigan, to Newark, New Jersey.

Last year, through his nonprofit [501CThree](#), Smith and cofounder Drew FitzGerald introduced the [Water Box](#), a mobile water filtration system that's able to process 10 gallons of water per minute. 501CThree centralized its focus on Flint, where a severe water contamination crisis was exposed in 2014. To date, four Water Boxes have been deployed across the city, providing more than 38,000 gallons of clean water.

And now the organization's first Water Box outside of Flint has landed in Newark.

Working with the [Newark Water Coalition](#), the Water Box was actually delivered in August but was only recently announced publicly after volunteer training and COVID-19 protocols were met. Since arriving in Newark, the Newark Water Coalition has used the Water Box to distribute 450 gallons of water to the community, which is the equivalent of 3,600 single-use 16 oz. water bottles.

It's commendable progress that's slowly chipping away at a problem that's bigger than what's happening just in Flint or Newark.

According to a [report](#) from the Natural Resources Defense Council that analyzed data from Environmental Protection Agency between 2016 and 2019, nearly 130 million people in the U.S. got their drinking water from

systems that violated the Safe Drinking Water Act. And those violations were 40% more likely to occur in places where there's a higher percentage of people of color. Also, small systems—those that serve less than 3,300 people and, according to the EPA, are typically “low-income and vulnerable populations”—were responsible for more than 80% of all violations.

“Point, blank, period: This is environmental racism,” says Anthony Diaz, cofounder of the Newark Water Coalition, in a short video about Newark’s Water Box. “Why is this disproportionately affecting people of color? It’s because people can get away with it here. People can sweep problems under the rug. And that’s where folks like us come in and we’re trying to fight this.”

And at least the fight is getting some calvary.

Find out more about 501CThree and Water Box [here](#).
